BUT I'M STILL CONSCIOUS! THE SUFFERING I EXPERIENCE IS GUT-WRENCHING...

ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME ...

...GIVES ME UNIMAGINABLE SUFFERING! ALL OF A SUDDEN, MY HEART IS GRIPPED BY THE COLD HAND OF DEATH, AND MY BODY STARTS TO SHIVER...

...SOMEONE GIVES ME A REAL SMILE.

UNTIL...

APPARENTLY, I'D BEEN SAVED WITH SOME "AQUA VITAE," A MIRACULOUS BREW THAT CAN HEAL ALL DISEASES. A PROSTHESIS HAD ALREADY REPLACED MY LOST ARM...

ONE DAY, I LOST ALL OF MY MEMORIES.

I WOKE UP IN FRANCE AND I HAD LOST AN ARM.

WHEN I LIVED IN JAPAN, I FOUGHT EVERY DAY TO LIVE NORMALLY, IN SPITE OF THE DISEASE...

THE NAME'S NARUMI KATO. I'VE GOT THIS WEIRD DISEASE.

...OR AT LEAST I TRIED!

ACT VII: KARAKURI * A MAN

"THOSE WHO BECAME SHIROGANES"

HE'S EXTREMELY PRETENTIOUS AND SNOBBISH, BUT ALSO VERY MYSTERIOUS.

THE AQUA VITAE WAS CREATED BY SOME KIND OF SCIENCE I'D NEVER HEARD ABOUT BEFORE CALLED "ALCHEMY." MY SAVIOR'S NAME IS GUY.

...BE-TWEEN GUY...

...AND SOME AUTOMATONS, HUMAN-SIZED PUPPETS THAT CAN ACT AND TALK ON THEIR OWN.

AFTER THAT, I WAS UN-WILLINGLY INVOLVED IN A FIGHT...

VWHHH_

HE PROMISED TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS THAT I WANTED TO ASK HIM.

GUY BROUGHT ME TO THIS PLACE CALLED QUIBERON, WHERE I CURRENTLY AM.

ACT VII: KARAKURI * A MAN
"THOSE WHO BECAME SHIROGANES"

I STILL DON'T KNOW WHY I'M IN FRANCE AND WHY I LOST AN ARM...

BUT...

...IN THE CURRENT SITUATION, IT'S NOT REALLY TIME TO BE ASKING QUESTIONS ANYMORE.

LADY! ARE YOU ALRIGHT ?!

!

DAH

WAKE UP! WE'RE GONNA ...

HUH ?!

?!

CURSED AUTOMATONS! THEY CAN EVEN DO THIS NOW...

EEEH!

GHHH!!

SHE LOOKS LIKE... A MUMMY!

SHE'S NOT EVEN BLEEDING!

WHAT'S WITH THIS BODY?!

MARIE...

WHERE ARE TANIA AND LUCILLE?

I CAN'T SEE... ANYMORE ...

IS THAT YOU... GUY?

IT'S ALMOST THE END... FOR ME...

I THINK THAT...

...I CAN FINALLY BID YOU FAREWELL.

I SEE...

HE BROUGHT HER TO CARNAC... TO SET A TRAP FOR YOU... LUCILLE... FOLLOWED THEM...

TANIA WAS ABDUCTED... BY AN AUTOMATON... NAMED FLAVIO...

FINALLY ...

...I CAN SAY "ADIEU"

...GUY.

BUT... WHAT ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT, GUY?!

DON'T WORRY, LADY, I'M GONNA BRING YOU TO A HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY!

YES ...

EVEN THE AQUA VITAE...

...CANNOT FORCE ME TO PLAY THIS CURSED ROLE OF "SHIROGANE" ANYMORE.

THOSE AUTOMATONS SUCKED OUT ALL OF MY BLOOD... TILL THE LAST DROP.

SHE'S TALKING ABOUT THAT STICKY STUFF THAT LOOKED LIKE MERCURY.

ONLY IF THEY ARE REGULARLY MIXED WITH FRESH HUMAN BLOOD...

I MUST LET YOU KNOW THAT... THE INTERNAL FLUIDS OF AUTOMATONS REMAIN EFFECTIVE ...

I CAN ONLY... HEAR YOUR VOICE... YOU ARE A NEW RECRUIT... ARE YOU NOT?

THEY...

...SUCKED OUT ALL OF YOUR BLOOD?!

WERE NOT PERFECT FOR PRODUCING MANY OTHER AUTOMATONS.

BUT THE VITAL FLUIDS SHE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF THE AQUA VITAE...

THAT PERFECT BREW CREATED BY USING ALCHEMY.

THEIR LEADER, FRANCINE, IS A PUPPET GIVEN LIFE BY THE AQUA VITAE...

AS I ONCE TAUGHT HIM BEFORE.

I CANNOT TEACH YOU ANY MORE THAN THIS.

GUY WILL TEACH YOU... THE REST...

ARE THEY AUTOMATONS OR VAMPIRES?!

THAT'S WHY THEY HAVE TO SUCK HUMAN BLOOD.

200 YEARS BEFORE I COULD DIE...

200 YEARS...

AAAH... IT WAS SO LONG...

GET YOURSELF TOGETHER, LADY! I BEG YOU!

I CAN FINALLY DIE...

...DO NOT REFUSE ME THIS GIFT!

...THERE IS ONE THING I ALWAYS REGRETTED.

YOU KNOW ...

HAHA

FAREWELL, ALL OF YOU...

GUY...

CRAC

CRAC

WHAT?!

SHE COULDN'T DIE... FOR 200 YEARS?!

...THE AQUA VITAE!

CRAC

...I SHOULD NEVER HAVE TAKEN...

WHEN I CAUGHT ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME ...

RROC

BOOM

GUY!!! ANSWER ME!!!

HAA

HAA

HAA

THIS ISN'T HOW... HUMAN BEINGS DIE...

ALSO... DID SHE SAY THAT SHE HAD ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME?!

PLOP

SAH...

YOU'VE FINALLY BEEN FREED...

...FROM THE CHAINS THAT BIND US TO THE AQUA VITAE.

I REALLY ENVY YOU...

...

GUY... WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

APPARENTLY, THIS LADY DIED BECAUSE SHE WAS ATTACKED BY AUTOMA-TONS...

AND... I UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY NEEDED HUMAN BLOOD.

YOU, AND THE "SHIRO-GANES!" WHO ARE YOU?!

YOU KNOW I HAVE ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME!

THIS WOMAN... SHE TALKED ABOUT THAT DISEASE IN A WEIRD WAY! WHY?!

NARUMI...

... WE, THE SHIROGANES, DESTROYERS OF AUTOMA-TONS...

...ARE ALL AFFECTED BY THAT DISEASE!

MARIE WAS GREATLY AFFECTED BY IT,

JUST AS I WAS, BY THE WAY...

?!

I WAS BORN IN PARIS TO A VERY WEALTHY FAMILY.

BUT I HAVE ONLY A FEW MEMORIES OF IT.

BLOMM

WHAT A

...I CAUGHT ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME WHEN I WAS STILL VERY YOUNG.

IN FACT ...

I CAN ONLY REMEMBER THE WALLS OF MY HOSPITAL ROOM.

I THOUGHT ONLY ABOUT ONE THING: HOW TO RELIEVE MY SUFFERING.

I WANTED TO DIE.

I WAS LIVING IN PERPETUAL ANGUISH.

...MARIE PAID ME A VISIT. IT WAS THE VERY FIRST TIME.

ONE DAY, WHEN THE WIND WAS BLOWING VERY STRONGLY, JUST LIKE TODAY...

WHEEE

ALTHOUGH THE REASON FOR IT IS UNKNOWN ...

...THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME CAN TELL WHERE SIMILARLY AFFLICTED PEOPLE ARE.

WHY HAVE YOU COME HERE?

WHO ARE YOU?

WHO...

VHHH

I AM WHAT'S CALLED... A "SHIRO-GANE."

MOMMY! HELP ME!!!

HER EYES LOOK SILVERY!!!

I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU A VERY SIMPLE QUESTION.

WOULD YOU RATHER DIE IN UNBEARABLE PAIN?

OR...

DO YOU WANT TO KEEP ON LIVING?

AND EVERY DAY, YOU ARE AFRAID OF EXPERIENCING THE EPISODE THAT WILL TAKE YOUR LIFE...

ONE DAY, YOU WILL FINALLY DIE... BECAUSE OF YOUR SICK-NESS.

HUH?

IF YOU DRINK A BIT OF THIS "AQUA VITAE,"

YOU WILL COMPLETELY BE CURED OF YOUR SICK-NESS.

YES ...

HOWEVER, I MUST WARN YOU...

WHAT?!

IS THAT TRUE?!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

THERE ARE ALREADY SO MANY THINGS I HAD TO GIVE UP!

YOU WILL HAVE TO GIVE UP MANY THINGS FROM YOUR PREVIOUS LIFE IN EXCHANGE.

THAT EVEN IF YOU ARE FREED FROM THE DISEASE ...

YOU WILL BECOME A PUPPET,

...THE POWERLESS TOY OF THE AQUA VITAE!

WHAT DO YOU CHOOSE?

Die

Live

SO...

GUY ..

HAA

HAA

HAA

HAA

HAA

HAA

HAA

I NEVER ASKED YOU THAT!

I'LL TAKE THIS CHANCE TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I WAS A GOOD BOY, AND ADORABLE, TOO!

IT WAS A TERRIBLE CHOICE FOR SOMEONE MY AGE.

AT THE TIME, I WAS ONLY FOURTEEN.

...IN ORDER TO ESCAPE FROM THE SUFFER-ING.

I DIDN'T REALLY HAVE A CHOICE...

I BECAME A SHIRO-GANE...

AND THEN?

I CHOSE TO BECOME THE PUPPET OF THE AQUA VITAE, EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T FULLY UNDERSTAND THE IMPLICATIONS OF IT.

RATHER THAN DYING LIKE A MISERABLE DOG...

THAT'S WHEN I UNDERSTOOD WHAT MARIE MEANT...

...WAS LOOKING BACK AT ME, A LITTLE ALARMED.

AND WHEN I LOOKED IN THE MIRROR, ANOTHER "ME" WITH SILVERY EYES...

WHAT DID YOU FEEL AT THAT TIME?!

WHEN I GOT UP, I FELT THAT MY BODY WAS FULL OF VITALITY, EVEN WITH MY SKINNY BODY.

DESTROY THE AUTOMA-TONS!!

SOMEONE OTHER THAN ME WAS GOING TO MAKE ALL THE DECISIONS.

MY BODY WAS NOT MINE ANY-MORE.

DESTROY THE AUTO-MATONS!!

AAAHHH!

DESTROY ...

DESTROY THE AUTO-MATONS!!

DESTROY THE AUTO-MATONS!!

I DON'T UNDER-STAND!

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

I RECEIVED SPECIAL TRAINING FROM MARIE AND THE OTHERS, WHICH WOULD ENABLE ME TO DESTROY ALITOMATONS.

THEN ...

I MADE MY WAY TO THIS PLACE WITHOUT A THOUGHT...

ITS VICTIMS CAN TELL WHERE IT SPREADS AT ANY TIME, RIGHT?

DOES THAT MEAN THAT AUTOMATONS ALSO SUFFER FROM ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME?!

SCHLAC!

YES. YOU GUESSED VERY WELL, NARUMI.

WHAT?!

ONLY THE VICTIMS OF ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME KNOW THE HORROR IT BRINGS.

AH...

BUT... WHAT ABOUT ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME?

THOSE WHO GET IT... WHY DO THEY HAVE TO BECOME SHIRO-GANES?

WHAT ?!

THE INTERNAL BODY FLUIDS OF AUTO-MATONS...

...ARE THE CAUSE OF ZONAPHA'S SYNDROME!

COME WITH ME, NARUMI, AND YOU WILL FIND ANSWERS TO MANY MORE QUESTIONS.

RIGHT NOW, AS WE SPEAK, THEY KEEP ON SPREADING THIS TERRIBLE DISEASE ALL OVER THE WORLD.

YOU LOOK SURPRISED, NARUMI.

SHIT, MAN!

FLAP